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ABSTRACT

This publication focuses on California Assembly Bill 3408, legislation mandating secondary schools to develop performance standards and performance tests for students. The paper analyzes progress made in implementing the legislation in California and outlines some of the barriers to successful implementation. The author explains several testing formats and procedures. He discusses the problem of setting standards too high. He notes that some students do not yet take the tests seriously and that some teachers do not feel responsible for student performance. Other problems are that follow-up results are too delayed, some parents do not cooperate, and parent-teacher conferences present communications difficulties. The author suggests ways to reinforce minimum skills and to offer remediation. He discusses the need for instructional and content validity, for reciprocity between districts, and for test security. Continuous modification of test instruments is recommended. Other concerns are for making the testing a positive experience, anticipating collective bargaining issues, reexamining the curriculum, using successful public relations techniques, and issuing alternative diplomas. (Author/JM)

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OPERATIONS NOTEBOOK #25

PERFORMANCE STANDARD REQUIREMENTS: THE CHALLENGE

by

James L. Olivero

September, 1979

PERFORMANCE STANDARD REQUIREMENTS: THE CHALLENGE

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PERFORMANCE STANDARD REQUIREMENTS: THE CHALLENGE

By
James L. Olivero*

Count Down

When Gary Hart, California Assemblyman from Santa Barbara, ushered AB 3408 through the legislative maze, many educators openly questioned what new wonders the solons had wraught. AB 3408, as everyone knows, was the law mandating secondary schools to develop performance standards for students, standards that had to be met if students were to receive a diploma.

Although many problems were associated with the concepts of performance standards--not only in California but in other states as well--the California State Department, local communities, educators, and professional associations set about the task of implementing the legislation. Even with considerable ambiguity in the law (and in the administrative regulations), most educators supported the notion that students receiving a high school diploma should possess at least minimum competencies in the areas of reading, mathematics, and composition. These foundation competencies are the building blocks for an educated citizenry, a citizenry aimed at opportunities for advancement and upward mobility.

In support of the minimum proficiencies, the ACSA Curriculum and Instruction Committee formulated and promoted the following resolution:

> "Assessment of pupil learning has been and continues to be important to the educational process. Educators, parents, students and community members share the responsibility for what and how well students learn. California's mandate requiring mastery of minimum proficiencies at certain grade levels presents a new challenge for school districts and those who develop and implement instructional programs.
>
> "Districts should, with staff-wide and community input, identify proficiencies that are important, specific and minimal. Norm referenced standardized tests should not be used as tests of minimum proficiencies since these tests rarely reflect the curriculum taught within individual schools. Criterion referenced tests are more appropriate for diagnosing individual student weaknesses and pinpointing remediation needs.
>
> "Minimum proficiency testing can be a positive educational development when used with proper concern for the individual

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*Dr. Olivero is the Professional Development Program Executive for ACSA. This paper is intended to present information of a practical value to school administrators in California. It should be recognized that (a) the applicability and value of such information may vary from district to district in a state as diverse as California, and (b) information herein printed is the expression of the author and is not necessarily a statement of policy of ACSA.

learner. However, it must be recognized there are students who are unable to demonstrate competency in the typical testing situation. Districts must consider other means of assessing competency for those students who might otherwise be denied a diploma. In addition, districts must continue to increase parents' and educators' understanding of the appropriate use and limitations of tests and alternative assessments as a measure of minimum proficiencies."

Time now is short and P-Day (Pressure Day) is just around the corner. P-Day comes after June, 1981, when students who have not reached acceptable levels of performance on locally-adopted standards are denied a diploma. Questions like the following are among the myriad of concerns. How many students will be denied diplomas? What percentage of denials will be represented by what ethnic groups? How many opportunities to pass the competencies did the student receive? Obviously some questions can't be answered until we learn responses from affected individuals subsequent to June, 1981. Even so, this paper attempts to (1) analyze where we are at this time in the process and (2) convey to interested people some of the constraints that stand in the way of successful implementation. Finally, the paper outlines actions at least some school people are taking to overcome the challenges.

By no means is the paper exhaustive in scope; it does attempt to cover the most frequently raised issues. Finally, since most of the pressure is likely to be felt at the secondary level (when students are denied diplomas vs. retaining a student at a lower grade level), the paper puts its focus on the high school. Realistically, however, with the performance standard requirements in AB 65, most of the factors outlined herein hold for schools at all levels.

What Are The Big Issues?

Since the passage of California's performance standard legislation, nearly everyone associated with secondary education has had the opportunity to be involved in the effortone way or another. Indeed, the current California laws on standards may be the most significant in any of the states, especially as they include staff, student, parent and other community people in the considerations for imperative school learnings. Clearly, performance standards have added specificity to otherwise somewhat global and noble school goals. Yes, the performance standard legislation is having an impact, but not without controversy.

For example, when the initial implementation requirements from the SDE were forwarded, reaction by many educators was negative:

- Some felt the legislators failed to address too many issues before the laws (AB 3408 and AB 65) were passed, i.e., the laws were too ambiguous on some points and the SDE guidelines didn't clarify sufficiently.

- Some felt the performance standard requirements involved another paper program, an academic exercise similar to the Stull Bill mandates. Some even believed the laws would simply go away (especially with knowledge of court proceedings in Florida and Oregon where the courts held in favor of those opposed to certain features of the performance standard requirements). Some language

- in the SDE Technical Assistance Guide implied that nearly every district would have litigation of one variety of another--re: performance standards.

- Some felt the lawmakers were not aware of the good work already underway at the local school. These people felt the laws an unnecessary burden on schools; local courses of study were already well above minimal levels of competence.

In due course, however, many of the early questions and objections were overcome. Even in those districts where first reactions were quite negative, educators and other publics got themselves together to consider, write, develop and test performance standards. In most districts performance standards were at least partially validated through controlled field-testing efforts. From the testing, local boards of education officially adopted the standards.

More than a few critics of education argue that performance standards should have been a part of schooling since day-one. Their omission, opponents claim, has caused the decline in student achievement from the mid-60's to the present. Perhaps this is true; perhaps the next few years will give us a better understanding of the relationship between performance standards and achievement.

Even with the strong early surge of action to define standards, much remains to be done. A glance around the state tells us, for instance, too many students simply aren't meeting expectations. The range of failure, apparently, has been from 20 to 88 percent; scores even vary within the same district. The percentage of failures is a serious problem. Anyone associated with a high school is well aware of possible repercussions should fifty percent of the seniors not march across the stage on graduation night. All hell would break loose in the district--and heads would roll.

Contrary to some statements from people in Sacramento who should know better, the purpose of performance standards is not to deny diplomas to ten to twelve percent of our high school population; performance standards should help educators make certain all students possess minimum skills for the challenges faced upon graduation. At least theoretically, all students should meet the minimal level of expectations.

This paper analyzes some of the problems that still exist and describes approaches schools have taken to oversome the constraints. Issues addressed here are:

- Testing procedures
- Expectations too high
- Students aren't serious
- Some teachers don't feel responsible
- Follow-up on results too delayed
- Some parents don't cooperate
- Conferencing difficulties
- Reinforcing minimum skills
- Remediation options limited
- Need for instructional and content validity
- Reciprocity between districts
- Test security
- Continuous modification and reconstruction

- Positive vs. punitive experience
- Collective bargaining concerns
- Re-examination of curricula
- Public relations
- Alternative diplomas

Not unsuprisingly, many of the preceding factors were with us long before decisions to implement performance standards; indeed, most of the issues will continue to be with us. Efforts to provide sensible teaching/learning opportunities for boys and girls demand the analysis of the factors.

The listing, obviously, is not all-inclusive. Hopefully it is suggestive enough to serve as a springboard for similar or related topics. Neither are the comments all-inclusive. In fact, not all of the comments are original; many in one way or another reflect the work of people in the SDE who have been so helpful in the design and production of the invaluable Technical Assistance Guide (Dave Gordon and Alex Law are two people who come quickly to mind as leaders). Other comments have come from members of ACSA's curriculum committees (Ken Sanders served as the chairperson of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee and Doris Prince Served as the chairperson of the Curriculum Specialists and Leaders Committee*). Even though information has been gleaned from many sources, the author accepts responsibility for the interpretations offered here. Let's look at each issue.

Testing Procedures

While there are a number of variations, essentially three types of testing formats have been tried: (1) integrated within the curriculum, (2) mass testing, and (3) small group testing. Each format has advantages and disadvantages.

The integrated approach may, in the long run, be the most sensible way to assess performance standards. With this format, standards are tested as normal routine throughout the regular course. This plan enables the teacher to teach toward the standards within the regular course context. Moreover, a teacher can check any student when the teacher feels the student is ready. The advantages of this format are obvious.

Unfortunately there are also distinct disadvantages (potentially). One major disadvantage is the paperwork requirement. When standards are integrated throughout the curriculum, each teacher is responsible for testing the students (and re-testing as necessary) within a particular class. Then the teacher must report to a recording center both those students who passed and those who didn't. The greater the magnitude of paper-shuffling, the greater the possibility for error.

Even more restricting, in fact, may be the problems generated when a student transfers into a school after the year has started. If the teacher has already tested regular students on some of the competencies, it then becomes necessary to retrace some steps for the new individual. In districts with highly transient student populations, the task for keeping track of students can become a tremendous burden. Penalties may soon outweigh any rewards and advantages to the integrated format.

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*For a listing of these committee members, refer to Appendix A.

In spite of these obvious shortcomings, at least two middle-sized school districts in California have chosen this option (Porterville and Fairfield-Suisun). They have found ways to keep their logistical difficulties to a minimum. Leadership in these districts can well be mirrored as other districts perfect similar assessment arrangements.

A second format commonly used is the mass testing approach. Large testing centers (frequently a cafeteria and/or a school gymnasium are used for this purpose) are organized and many students are tested at one time. The two real advantages of this arrangement seem to be:

--many people are involved at one time; must students, as a result, tend to take the session seriously, and

--the method is efficient; students can have their papers checked quickly.

Some schools find monitoring and proctoring easier if there are only a few testing centers to check. Moreover, when one person in a large testing center is responsible for giving directions (vs. many people in multiple centers), chances for error are reduced. Educators in large schools may find they have no other option but the mass testing approach.

At least two disadvantages are associated with the large group design. First, there often is a feeling by students that the entire testing arrangement is impersonal, designed so the situation is punitive rather than rewarding. Students don't perform very well in this kind of setting. Second, some teachers outside the disciplines of mathematics and English have failed to accept responsibility for helping students achieve basic survival skills in reading, computation, and composition. Large group testing may further exclude some of the very staff members who need to accept their share of the responsibility.

The small group testing format offers advantages not available in the other two approaches, especially when everyone gets in the act. The small group arrangement is most appropriate, perhaps, for small and middle-sized schools. The procedure works most effectively when the entire student population is divided by the number of qualified people on the staff; including the principal, vice principal, deans, counselors, teachers and so forth. By using all hands, the student/teacher ratio usually trims out around 20/1. This is a manageable size. The small groups help to ensure the likelihood that: (1) more people on the staff will accept ownership/responsibility for the performance standard requirements, (2) feedback and turn-around time re: test results is minimized, and (3) conferencing results are enhanced. (These latter topics will be developed more fully later in this paper.)

One final word about testing procedures. Take time prior to the testing (irrespective of the format) to teach students "testing skills;" that is, prepare students to take tests. These suggestions may be helpful:

- Encourage students to proceed through items on a test that can be answered quickly and correctly; help students avoid getting hung up on a difficult item that may cause the anxiety level to rise, resulting in less adequate performance on other portions of the test.

- Prepare students for the test in advance by reviewing the basic topics covered in the assessment and the various types of test

layouts and answer systems; often these can be very confusing.

- Remind students that statements with the words "always," "never," "every," are usually false.
- Suggest to students the most likely response on a multiple choice test format is "C."
- Encourage students to keep from being psyched out from using "none of the above" if the answer seems applicable.
- Remind students extra-long true/false statements are likely to be "true" as those constructing the items tend to clarify responses through detailed explanation.

Other suggestions are beneficial. In short, a school staff can help students by rehearsing the students for the exam.

Expectations Too High

One nagging difficulty associated with performance standards is the tendency to set standards too high, especially when the standards are developed by educators and a lay advisory group--and when the standards are approved by the local board of education. Even though AB 3408 and AB 65 describe standards in terms of minimal competencies (that is, what minimum levels of performance should a graduating high school person possess to function in our contemporary society?), there is a natural inclination to place minimums fairly high.

No matter how the decision is made, it is a judgment call--for probably no one really knows what the minimum levels of proficiency truly are. Probably they vary for most individuals. Nearly anyone, for instance, can point to a few individuals who for one reason or another dropped out of school. But with high motivation, the dropouts earned themselves important and respected positions in the community. When they dropped out, did they possess minimum survival skills? Conversely, at the other end of the spectrum are people with high (tested) I.Q.'s, people who have graduated from college who have had easy access to fiscal resources--but they still couldn't make it. Who does and who does not possess survival skills is an onerous question.

At best, then, no matter what standards are accepted, they usually represent reasonable hunches by people of good will at the local level. Fortunately (although there is some debate about this position), the legislators in California were foresighted enough to permit the determination of standards at the local level. California, for example, does not have the type of statewide regency exams used in New York; hopefully, some of the negativism which has surrounded the testing plan in New York can be avoided in California. Even if locally determined standards are too high or too low, they can be changed easier at the local rather than the state level.

Those who did opt for statewide standards focused on three relevant issues. First, they believed the fiscal and human costs necessary to develop performance standards for each unified or high school district were too great when compared to expected outcomes. The state, said the propenents, could have developed a single test and it could be used throughout the assessment program. (I should point out here that while standards are set by each district, many districts have standards that are very, very similar. Some

local units have, it seems, adopted standards validated by other districts. For instance, the SHARP test developed in the Los Angeles Unified School District is one example of a test format and a set of standards chosen by other districts.) Second, those opposed to local standards argued that a child could move from one district to another until s/he met the requirements. This potential transiency could put the state of education in turmoil. Although there may be a few examples of this, the acceptance of the hypothesis seems unlikely. The argument is one to keep an eye on as the intent of the laws becomes operable.

Finally, a few educators argued that local school districts--with their lack of resources and with other legislative and judicial mandates forced on them from all directions--would botch the process so thoroughly legislators would soon demand a statewide assessment procedure. These educators took the tactic of "Why fight it?" In the long run--if the argument holds--people in districts who tried to fulfill their responsibilities with professional care will be penalized harshly, probably receiving the same criticism (by association) as others who made no attempt to get their act together. Fortunately, most districts accepted the challenge.

Indeed, in my random-sample, unsophisticated analysis of what has happened up and down the state, the general attitude about local vs. state determination of expectations is one of the very few areas of local control remaining for boards of education. For this reason, few people want to give up one last hope of local control irrespective of the constraints.

There are few examples where standards at the local level have been set too low; newspaper accounts illustrate just the opposite. One early analysis by ACSA noted the "failure" rate between 20 and 88 percent. Fortunately, performances improved as test items were validated and as the seriousness of the situation was realized by parents, educators, and students.

Examples of districts where standards may have been placed too high are plentiful. In one Northern California district, for instance, a local board member argued that minimal graduation requirements should be the same as the entrance criteria for the University of California. By anyone's perception, that expectation represented a high "minimum standard." In another district, a young woman was denied a diploma because she missed the cut-off level on a district spelling test--by one point. This same young lady had earned a 3.2 grade point average, had completed four years of high school in three years, had been the president of the drill team, and had learned to play two musical instruments. Without going into gory details, suffice it here to say the district came unglued when it appeared the young woman would not receive a diploma. Outcome: she graduated!

The most viable solution to the high or low expectation issue comes about through early field-testing and validation of test items. (Additional comments regarding expectations are offered under "Public Relations" and "Item Analysis" sections later in this paper.)

Early field testing and validation can help everyone, among other things, get a grasp on the kinds of topics covered in the test items; the levels of difficulty; the different perceptions (understandings) people have about different items on the assessment instrument; and the voids between what is taught in class and what is measured on the exam. Early field-testing and validation enables school people to make sensible changes before their backs are against the wall. (If a large percentage of students fail to graduate, backs will be against the wall.) Validating a

test, though, isn't all that simple. Since most educators have had relatively little experience with the fine art of item testing and instrument construction--although probably all educators have given their fair share of tests--bringing in an outside consultant to assist with the instrumentation may be a good expenditure of scarce funds. The investment could be among the dollars best spent in the district.

In closing this section, I want to underscore how care needs to be taken to avoid setting expectations too low or too high--realizing full well that any criteria used in these judgments are at best subjective. Set too low, students and parents can lose respect for the schools. In minority neighborhoods the designation of low standards can transmit an insidious racist message, i.e., since you are a minority, our expectations aren't very high. To the contrary, we should expect all students to perform as well as their potentials will enable them to perform. Standards set too high may cause some students to view the entire procedure as one more opportunity to make them look bad. These students may be somewhat slower academically than some other students in the school, but they are unlikely to be positive about school and/or themselves if they feel they have been in school for many years and still have very little to show for it.

Standards set at reasonable levels can help student realize the importance of an education, can reinforce teachers because the staff recognizes the students being taught are, in fact, learning, and can help the public regain an appreciation for the worth and merit of education and the funtions of the school. These are all worthwhile goals.

Remember, standards are not cast in concrete--they can be raised or lowered as necessary--this is a local option. Districts should be willing to use their option as necessary.

Students Aren't Serious

People at site after site--including students themselves--have expressed the notion that many young people have not, as yet, decided to take the performance standard testing seriously. At one school I visited, the students stated frankly that the school could not possibly allow a large number of people to keep from graduating. The students could be correct.

Obviously if students do well on the assessments, they need to take some major shares of responsibility for their own learning.

One reason students aren't especially excited about the performance procedures is because of past testing episodes to which they have been subjected. Students involved in different types of categorically funded programs may have been inundated with tests. Some have been bombarded with the Stanford Achievement Test, the California Test of Basic Skills, the Iowa Test of Educational Development, and so forth. To make matters worse, students have frequently been tested both early in the school year as well as at the close of the year. This saturation of testing (especially when students see no results of their toils) quickly wears one out--and a poor "set" for future testing is established.

Another reason to avoid testing comes from students who haven't attained much success in school. These youngsters may slough off the requirement; this becomes a face-saving device. Few people ever want to take on a task

if they believe--going in--they will not be successful. If a student really tried and was unsuccessful, the defeat would be considerably greater than when the student gave the impression of not caring one way or another.

To beat the lack of seriousness attitude, schools have started at least two practices from which have come early, positive results. First, schools have found ways to "celebrate" the students who met the standards. One school near Lake Tahoe, for example, saw to it that successful students' names were printed in the local newspaper; a school in Southern California issued an achievement certificate to students at an all-school assembly. Realistically, immediacy of reinforcement is a key factor in the celebration plan--students respond favorably when they receive recognition soon after the administration of the tests. Recognition months later doesn't have much of an impact.

Another practice is that of special "study teams." These teams of students act as mentors to other students who had limited difficulty with the competency requirements. For study teams to be effective, they need to know the specific areas on which to place attention. This means teachers must make an extensive review of the assessment results and design learning packages for use by the study teams.

Lack of seriousness is reflected by the fact too many students fail to take a final look at their work before turning it over to the assessment proctor. Sloppiness or lack of care is clearly one factor that has prevented some students from meeting the minimal levels of performance. Prevention beats remediation: waiting until the administration of the competency test is not the time to begin instructing students on the need to eliminate sloppiness. Accuracy, attention-to-detail, and pride in producing a quality, finished product can all be taught at an early age in the learning sequence. Getting serious about the standards is possible; a shift toward a more positive attitude has already been noted in many districts.

Some Teachers Don't Feel Responsible

Sometimes it seems the higher a student progresses in the educational system, the less the teachers feel an obligation to help students meet performance requirements. This is especially true if the teacher's subject is outside the disciplines of mathematics or English. Not all, but perhaps too many secondary teachers believe the responsibility for students to attain survival skills rests on the shoulders of middle school teachers. Likewise, at least some middle school people hold elementary teachers responsible for shouldering the task. (One elementary school teacher suggested making contraception retroactive; that should eliminate all problems.)

Buck-passing may help reduce some anxiety--by putting the burden on some other doorstep--but the fact is, too few students are not meeting the minimum performance expectations. It behooves all educators to focus on the fact.

A portion of AB 65 seems pertinent in regard to articulation and continuity between elementary/intermediate/high school faculties, especially when students matriculate through different schools and districts at the various levels. AB 65 now requires a team of people from different school districts (if the districts are non-unified) to confer with each other so at least in theory teachers at one level should know what all others in the different

systems are supposed to do. But the process of continuity and articulation can't stop here.

People on the teams must have the ability to return to their sites and to communicate with others exactly what the expectations are--and how each person must accept some portion of the total task. This is no easy job; many educators believe too much has already been tossed in their laps, that neither parents nor students are serious about learning, that the competency fad will soon fade into oblivion (as have many other modifications in the history of education), that the assessment items are irrelevant, that the paperwork is too great--or any other of a myriad of possible, negative responses. If communication is desirable, a person with known credibility will likely be more effective than someone who may know the subject, but who may not command respect. To overcome the resistance of feet draggers, every advantage is needed.

Some schools have found the following helpful when enlisting the abilities and talents of all staff members. Have a leader: (1) present the test items and the rationale for picking specific topics over other options in each area to be assessed; (2) actually test staff members using the regular items on the assessment; (3) use the small group testing procedures in a simulated activity (discussed earlier in the paper). Hopefully this experience will encourage staff members to commit themselves to individual students; and (4) demonstrate an analysis follow-up describing instructional and content validity procedures. Shared ownership for the entire procedure is indeed desirable.

When one has not been involved in the actual selection of test topics and items (and many teachers have not), initial reactions are likely to be negative. With some background (keep it brief and simple) and rationale, however, other members of the staff usually become reasonably receptive. One common complaint often expressed by staff members is the perceived difference between an item on a test and the transferability (utility) of the processes to match the test requirement with a real-life situation. For example, in one school district students were asked to subtract <u>two</u> sets of four digit numbers, i.e.,

$$\begin{array}{r} 4{,}397 \\ -\ 1{,}244 \\ \hline 3{,}153 \end{array}$$

In one portion of the test, the first set was very straight-forward, i.e.,

$$\begin{array}{r} 4{,}397 \\ -\ 1{,}244 \\ \hline 3{,}153 \end{array}$$

In another portion of the test, however, students were asked to perform the very same operation on a bank balance sheet--using the same numbers. Surprisingly, the correct responses for the first set dropped from 92 percent accuracy to 44 percent accuracy on the second set. Careful consideration about transferability/application is advisable if not imperative. Conceivably a person can work twenty four-digit problems from a page out of an arithmetic book in school quite correctly; it may be altogether another thing, however, for a student to balance a checkbook. The latter application task is the one a student will most likely use upon graduation from high school.

The most heated discussions among faculty members--as with other people--usually comes when levels of expectations are announced; invariably some staffers will believe the expectations are too high while others will claim any second grader should score 100 percent on such simple requirements. The debate may even proceed to a point where some will declare, "It's no wonder the public has lost faith in our schools. We must insist on more than these for a high school diploma!"

Convincing everyone may be next to impossible, especially if no field-testing data are available, but actually having staff members take the exam--as well as score their own battery (no need to embarrass anyone)--is one way to gain attention. This procedure often serves as a realistic appraisal for many faculties; invariably a few do not meet the performance expectations defined for the graduating group. Until scores from four or five years of testing are gathered, discussions regarding the relevancy or irrelevancy of test items, the raising or lowering of expectations, and other types of related topics, there are likely to be interesting debates with more heat than illumination. We need much more information than is now available to make sound judgments. We are where we are--at the beginning.

Follow-Up Results Too Delayed

Students, educators, and parents all are likely to give more support to the minimum competency program when results are efficiently and effectively communicated. Surely, over time, procedures associated with feedback and follow-up will improve, but to date, unfortunately, there are some major horror stories about scoring and reporting problems. One district, using a computer scoring system, had four months elapse between the test period and the feedback period. The computer folks finally acknowledged they had difficulty with their assignment because of malfunctions with optical scan equipment. Who needs the computer? Anyone deciding to use a system other than hand-scoring will want to check out that system well in advance. The kind of embarrassment illustrated above shouldn't happen.

There is no one best method for scoring and sending information back to students and staff, but a model built around the small group testing format offers several viable features; many of the features, incidentally, can be modified to also fit the large group testing format.

The illustration below shows one way to get the job done.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Regular School Day	10:00 sm. gp. testing: Reading	Reading Fdbk. Math Test	Math Fdbk. Comp. Test	Regular School Day
3:00 Faculty Mtg. (Reading Bkgd.)	1:30 Minimum Day .score .analyze .math bkgd.	1:30 Minimum Day .score .analyze .comp. bkgd.	1:30 Minimum Day .score .analyze *	

*Feedback on the composition assessment is scheduled for the following Monday. Extended time is often needed to review writing samples.

As depicted in the sample, Monday and Friday are regular school days. No assessment is scheduled for these days, largely because Monday and Friday are the two heaviest days when student (and staff) absences occur. (The need for make-up exams will always be a problem, but using what is known about absenteeism, Monday and Friday are days not to test.)

At the Monday afternoon faculty meeting those people who developed the reading assessment should walk the other staff members through the test and explain the administration requirements. Note: in the small group testing format, no person is responsible for more than 15 to 20 students. Even so, it's imperative that staff members pay close attention to directions so the testing format and administrative procedures can be followed correctly. (To be on the safe side, some schools appoint a "rover" who, during the testing period, can move from one spot to another just in case questions arise that were not addressed during the faculty preview.)

Then Tuesday morning, at a designated time--with students reporting to designated locations--the actual reading assessment begins. An assembly-type schedule (at the secondary level) can help to carve out time for the testing period. This adjustment enables students to attend all other classes, at least for a few minutes, even though the school is scheduled for a minimum day.

When the faculty reconvenes for a work session (the afternoon of the first minimum day), the leader of the reading team can use a guide similar to the following to promote understanding and ownership:

- Discuss thoughts regarding ease or difficulty of the test administration.
- Score papers (since each person should have no more than 20 papers, the scoring should require only a minimum amount of time).
- Complete item analysis (have each scorer report--by show of hands--how many students marked items correctly or incorrectly. For multiple choice items, identify exactly what choices were picked by students with what percentage of consistency). The item analysis serves as a guide for follow-up action, e.g., what remedial classes may be necessary, what independent learning packages may need to be developed, what changes in curriculum may be appropriate, and so forth.

Incidentally, when parent/student conferences are held, information from the item analysis can help explain where deficiencies were noted as well as what prescriptive action is needed to rectify the weakness.

After the pertinent reading information has been cleared away, the math leader then walks the staff through the next testing sequence, similar to the procedure used on Monday by the reading leader. The daily schedule mirrors itself Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday--as do the procedures. But because the composition samples may take longer to score, additional time for this purpose is gained by offering that test last. (A later faculty meeting can be used to analyze the results.)

When the preceding guide is followed, students are given immediate feedback, i.e., the next morning. (Clearly there are both advantages and

disadvantages to the early feedback effort. While I favor quick feedback and reinforcement as well as the opportunity to celebrate learning, each faculty needs to determine a procedure it can live with.) The composition and "total battery" feedback can be given on Monday or Tuesday of the following week. Whatever day is selected, all students should receive feedback. When some do and some don't, the faculty loses credibility.

The foregoing, naturally, can be modified in many ways; the pieces should be modified depending on the special needs and characteristics of the students and the institution. Irrespective of the procedures, generally the faster the feedback the greater the possibility for positive outcomes.

Some Parents Don't Cooperate

Education of the young is a task that requires cooperation and support between at least three different parties--the student, the parents, and school personnel. Each party must work with the other groups to ensure quality educational opportunities.

There is at least some evidence at this time that many parents--for one reason or another--are less than cooperative and supportive. Two cases illustrate this point. In one district with nearly 1,600 students, about eighty percent of those who took the performance test did not meet the qualifying levels of achievement. The school people then, as required by law, began their task of notifying parents regarding the inadequate performance. Moreover, the parents were asked to meet with their students and a representative from the staff to discuss what actions seemed reasonable to help the student meet the standards. In this very large high school, only 24 parents responded to the calls and letters from the school by attending a conference. It is an understatement to say the people on the staff felt rejected and frustrated. Many felt they were being asked to assume one more parental responsibility--because the parents simply didn't care. Whether or not the case, the teachers believed their perceptions were correct and they acted on their perceptions. (Perhaps inaction is a better description of their behavior.)

In another school, over 100 students did not meet the acceptable level of standards. When parents from this school were asked to meet with the staff at a face-to-fact conference, only three parents showed -- two of those came from the same family.

What can be done to gain support? It may be instructive to look both at causal and associated variables. Some parents believe that by the time a youngster has reached high school, the parent has little or no responsibility for the student's educational choices. It is hard to get assistance if parents truly believe the student is on his/her own. Discussions with parents--accurate or inaccurate--underscore two additional factors that may also have considerable bearing on the issue. First, many parents have indicated they were unaware of background information regarding performance standards, e.g., purpose, implementation, consequences, etc. If this analysis is accurate, the schools have an uphill battle to inform parents about the relatively new legal requirements of AB 3408 and AB 65. (More about this in the section on Public Relations.) Who knows what media are best, as some schools have had articles in the paper, programs promoted over television, newsletters mailed to the home, presentations made at parent meetings--and still a large percentage of parents is uninformed. The easiest time to talk with parents is when their students are

participating in some kind of school activity. Either oral or printed communication can be used at football games, class plays, bake sales and so forth. Clearly, there are many other ways to communicate with parents, e.g., coffee klatches, parent meetings, newsletters--but the underlying issue, perhaps, evolves around the question of why parents don't get involved at the high school level.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a prevailing attitude among both parents and students that parents should keep themselves away from the high school. The high school territory is reserved solely for the students unless some very special occasion occurs. The graduation ceremony seems to top the list of special occasions; athletics are also allowable. As amazing as it seems, more parents are involved in booster-club type activities than in the vital curriculum decision exhanges that may have lasting influence on a child's life. Woe is us!

One administrator in California has expressed the belief that parents should be made to cooperate. This educator offers an argument something akin to the following. If a 16 year old is ticketed for speeding in an automobile, it is the responsibility of a parent to attend a session in juvenile court with the youngster. Should the parent not meet with the judge, the issuance of a citation to the adult(s) is possible (probable). Since an education is more important than the privilege of driving, argue the proponents, a parent(s) should be issued a citation if s/he failed to attend the school-sponsored conference. Only when a fine is paid (to the school) or a conference held, would the citation be withdrawn. Incidentally, conference funds from the cumulative fines could be used to finance those special education options to remedy student debits on the performance standards.

The logic of the proposed citation may make sense, but the possibility that a politician would amend this relief into current legislation is unlikely. Most educators, too, while discouraged at examples of parent apathy, would prefer a less punitive solution to the problem. Whatever is done, something must help generate a more positive attitude on the part of all concerned. The results of students passing or failing the performance standards are too important to leave to chance--or to the responsibility of one group.

The South San Francisco Unified School District is one district that has initiated an affirmative action approach which, according to Bob Parr, has paid off handsomely in dividends. Working through an outside agency (the San Mateo County Office of Education), the local district has worked to maintain the important involvement of parents well beyond the "adoption of competencies" phase of the performance testing sequence. Following are sample letters to both parents and site administrators illustrating the procedure used. (See following pages.)

At the meeting with concerned parents, not only can testing results be disseminated, but specific action for support can be solicited. A relatively small number of people can be extremely effective in maintaining open communication with other constituencies in the community. At least theoretically, the better the job of communication, the more likely parents will join the team in support of appropriate educational opportunities.

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Administration Building
398 "B" Street
South San Francisco, California 94080
(415) 877-8700

Dear

The Planning and Evaluation Department of the San Mateo County Office of Education has agreed to assist the South San Francisco Unified School District with its evaluation of the district's "Hart" testing and competency setting program. They plan to meet with small groups of parents at each of the secondary schools to obtain parental views of this new program.

Your name was selected at random from the school's class lists and, therefore, you are being asked to participate. I hope you will be able to attend the meeting scheduled for the place and time listed below.

Place:_____

Date:_____

Time:_____

If you have any questions, please call me at 877-8709. Your assistance in this project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sheldon L. Winston
Director of Secondary Education

SLW:ad

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Intra-District Communication

TO: All Secondary Principals Date: May 7, 1979
FROM: Sheldon Winston RE: Follow-up Survey on Hart Testing

The county office has agreed to use their personnel to survey our parents regarding the Hart testing procedure in our district.

They will come to your school on the following dates:

May 22 - Southwood - (½ Day 1:00 - 3:00) Earl Nielson

May 22 - Alta Loma - (all day) Randy Cognetta

May 23 - El Camino - (all day) Randy Cognetta

May 24 - So. San Francisco - (all day) Earl Nielson

May 24 - El Camino - (all day) Randy Cognetta

May 25 - So. San Francisco - (all day) Earl Nielson

May 25 - Westborough - (all day) Cecil Reeves

May 25 - Parkway - (all day) Randy Cognetta

The schedule will be:

9:00 - 9:45
10:00 - 10:45
11:00 - 11:45
1:00 - 1:45
2:00 - 2:45

There will be 6 parents invited together for each 45 minute session, for a total of 30 parents for each junior high school except Southwood. The same schedule will apply for the senior high schools for a total of 60 parents for each high school.

Please set aside some space on the assigned date for the county representative to meet with 6 parents at one time.

I will need a list of parents or students from your school who took the Hart test. The list should have parents of children who did well on the Hart test and parents whose children did poorly on the test. This should be a representative sample of your ethnic makeup.

My office will contact the parents by mail. Please let me have the parents' names and addresses by May 11.

SW:ad

cc: Dr. Kelly
Mr. Gaffney

Conferencing Difficulties

An ACSA Curriculum Action Paper (CAP) deals specifically with conferencing matters, especially with those communication difficulties that may arise during confrontations. (For more information on possible ways to enhance communication during confrontation situations, request the CAP from the ACSA Burlingame Office. The CAP was written by Dan Nasman, San Diego County Office of Education.)

Rather than making an attempt here to expand on the CAP, this section breaks out in two other directions. One is to offer suggestions on how to make the number of conferences more manageable and the other is to offer suggestions on how administrators and teachers can be more realistic in what they promise parents. A final paragraph or two focuses on sensible precautions to take when interacting with parents and students during the follow-up conferences.

From what we know about test scores, many schools would be absolutely inundated with conferences if the conferences were held following the initial testing. Using initial testing as a benchmark, at least half of the student population could need a follow-up conference. The law, indeed, specifies the importance of student-parent school conferences. But while the laws require the conferences, there is nothing in the law that requires contact at the conclusion of the first testing. For the first approach at conferencing, it may make sense to hold a "group" session; that is, notify by mail parents of those students who failed to pass and invite them to an evening session where follow-up options can be presented and discussed.

On completion of the second testing, the number of students needing follow-up--at least theoretically--should be reduced significantly. This is the time to make the telephone calls for personal conferences. Again, if the students are divided equally among the certificated staff, the burden on any particular staffer should not be too great.

As might be expected, there will be at least some paperwork. The following form may be beneficial.

SCHOOL NAME

_____
Name of Student

Telephone Contact Date(s): Staff Signature

Letter Contact Date(s): Staff Signature

Results and/or Comments:

Parent Signature_____ Student Signature_____

This form allows for both telephone and letter contacts. A letter is used when it is impossible to contact the parent by phone (as defined in the law). At the conference, agreements reached can be written on the bottom of the document and the parent and student signatures affixed. The form is usually placed in the student's cumulative folder. Should the student transfer to another school, the record travels with the student; the document can be used as a diagnostic tool by the staff at the new school.

During the conference, the staff member should also have available the assessment results (including an item analysis for the student) and a checksheet of curriculum alternatives available for prescribed remediation. These support papers, too, should be maintained in the cumulative folder. Some staff members, invariably, are better organized than others; for this reason some qualified person should be assigned to stay on top of the entire school procedure to make certain all of the appropriate details are attended. Considering the magnitude of paperwork and details and the number of people included, it is inevitable that some errors will be made. Take care to avoid as many as possible.

To date, the most serious conflicts have come from the tendency on the part of educators to promise more than they can deliver. That is, staff members concerned about lack of student progress prescribe a variety of activities hoping to overcome deficiencies. Then, because so much has been promised to so many, the staff is unable to keep up with all the demands. Not long after the confusion begins, the school--usually the principal--receives complaints from the patrons who are upset with what they consider as mistreatment.

With the preceding in mind, the principal is urged to give the staff practice via simulated conferences in actual conferencing techniques. What to say and what not to say can be covered during the simulation. Work out bugs in the system prior to the real-life situation.

One "bug" to resolve may be the communication vs. commitment gap that can occur between the person holding the conference and the person or persons on the staff expected to implement the prescriptions. The conference holder must take care to avoid over-subscribing students to remedial classes, to make certain needed learning packages are available, and to arrange for subsequent testing opportunities if needed. In short, pre-planning can make for reduced anxieties and frustrations on the part of all involved. When the implementor is different than the conference holder, open communication is imperative. The "holder" must be well aware of the total responsibilities on the shoulders of the implementor; the doers have limitations too.

A final precaution. Some otherwise excellent teachers simply can't or don't communicate very well during conferences when parents are involved. Make allowances for these people. Special arrangements, too, are appropriate when attempting to avoid those situations where known negative exchanges are likely to take place. These special arrangements may be needed when particularly difficult parents are scheduled for a conference. Fortunately, most educators know who these people are and can plan for responsible action.

Reinforcing Minimum Skills

Intereviews with students suggest a variety of mitigating circumstances that may have caused young people to perform less well on the performance

standards than one might anticipate. Students interviewed often said they had at one time known the answers to the items on which they were tested, but over time had forgotten the procedures or techniques used to obtain correct answers. This response was more prevalent when discussing mathematics and composition as opposed to reading. If a student participates in and passes a course in basic mathematics in the ninth grade, conceivably s/he might forget such things as inverting the fraction to divide when tested later in grade eleven.

The forgetting factor does call for some method to reinforce the basic skills during the entire secondary experience--even perhaps for those students who early on perform acceptably on the performance standard assessment. Here are two different workable approaches.

The first approach is consistent with the principle that the basics should be reinforced periodically for all students. This reinforcement would cover a full week of special instruction via a designated period built into the daily schedule three or four times during the year. The procedure assumes all teachers are capable (upon minimum background instruction from a subject specialist on the staff) to teach a small group of students the needed fundamentals.

Following a training session for instructors and using a lesson plan designed by the subject specialist, an abbreviated period (forty to fifty minutes) during a five day schedule can be designated for all students to work on prescribed functions. Those topics discovered as weaknesses through the item analysis are generally emphasized during the reinforcement period.

A second approach is one whereby students who need greater attention can come either early for special refresher classes or they can stay after school for the same type of instruction. This latter option is difficult in schools where busing or activity programs conflict. Since the special arrangements would be necessary only three times per year, however, perhaps the logistical limitations could be overcome.

One final option is also added here for consideration. This approach includes placing in the school library a variety of learning packages consistent with the topics adopted as standards. After receiving diagnostic information on items not passed, students can check out useful packets. This practice rightfully places considerable responsibility back on the learner where much of it belongs; but it also means teachers need to prepare the materials. A welcome activity for many teachers is the opportunity for summer employment to design and prepare learning activity packages. This can be in-service money very well spent.

Remediation Options Limited

Although ACSA has prepared a Curriculum Action Paper (mentioned earlier) offering a dozen or so alternatives for those students failing to achieve acceptable levels on the performance tests, a given school may find remediation options quite limited. Summer school is probably one of the alternatives open to both students and teachers--providing the state offers support money for summer school, money which does not come out of the regular operating budget. But it is often quite difficult to add follow-up courses during the regular school year, especially when teachers' schedules may already be full, typically a result of too many students or too many course

preparations. All factors considered, the possibility is great that the smaller the school, the more likely the alternatives will be limited.

There may be little an individual school can do to overcome the constraint of limited alternatives, except to make an original analysis of what is and what is not viable and then work within the constraints--making certain that everyone is well aware (in advance) of the restrictions.

Principals are encouraged to obtain a copy of the CAP and review carefully with the staff the options mentioned in the paper. Subsequent periodic checks with the staff to ascertain if the effects of selected alternatives are worthwhile can help a school stay on top of both of what is and what should be.

Need for Instruction and Content Validity

Nearly everyone agrees litigation will stem from individuals or groups who believe AB 3408 or AB 65 is unfair in some way. One group of cases will likely react to the "English only" statement in the laws--that is, the actual standards of proficiency for a high school diploma must be administered only in English. (The laws do say early warning assessments can be administered in languages other than English.) Representatives of non-English and limited-English speaking students will likely claim the performance standards are discriminating and, therefore, unconstitutional.

Theoretically, certain students are capable of meeting the levels of expectation in a native language (other than English). The question is: is depriving an otherwise competent person from a high school diploma discriminatory? Considering the way courts have leaned with the Lau vs. Nichols and other similar cases, the outcome should be interesting. Any guess about the outcome at this time would be just that--a guess. Because of ambiguity, the implications for schools are uncertain. Further comment here--except to draw attention to the probability--would only add further ignorance to considerable confusion. The best that can be hoped for, perhaps, is an early court ruling.

There is also another area where litigation in California can nearly be guaranteed. These cases will evolve around content and instructional validity issues. Courts in Oregon and Florida have already faced similar problems and have held that schools acted unfairly when students were tested on information they were never taught, especially when the students were then denied a high school diploma. The implication from these court cases is obvious; make certain there is specific accountability for instructional and content validity.

Let's look at one court case as a precedent and then see why instructional and content validity are so important--and more importantly, what can be done to ensure coverage.

Perhaps the most appropriate precedent is to review the John Doe vs. San Francisco Unified School District litigation, a case ruled on a few years ago. In this litigation, parents attempted to hold the school district liable (malpractice) because the district had granted a diploma to a youngster even though the graduate could not read well enough to attract and hold a job. After considerable debate, the court held the school district free from harm because there was no way the school could be held

totally responsible for teaching the student to read. The court pointed out that learning is not simply a matter of teaching--learning is dependent on many variables such as: support from the home, the socioeconomic level of the family, the effort invested by the student, and a host of other variables.

Whether or not the findings of the San Francisco court will hold now when schools, in effect, have guaranteed students have attained minimal levels of competency remains to be seen. There are, however, at least minimum precautions that can be made to help avoid potential litigation on the instructional and content validity issues.

One way is to devise a matrix like that which follows. At a faculty meeting fill it in. (A complete description about the process can be ordered from Wayne Jordan, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Office.)

(Sample Only)

AREA: MATHEMATICS COMPETENCY YEAR:_____

ITEM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SUBJECT AND COURSE	/////	/////	/////	/////	/////	/////	/////	/////
Art 1, 2		III					II	
Graphics				I		I		
Bus. Math	I			II				
English 1, 2			I		I		I	
History 1, 2				III		II		I
P. E. 1, 2		II			II			
Science 1, 2	II							II
E			II			III		
T							III	III
C.		I			III			
	III							
			III					

I - Primary Responsibility
II - Secondary Responsibility
III - Third Level Responsibility

The matrix has two dimensions. The horizontal dimension (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) depicts the specific item on the mathematics competency test. The vertical dimension is used to test each of the course offerings--by department--in the school's course of study.

Then, as can be seen from the chart, for each item on the mathematics performance standards, the course in which primary responsibility resides is checked; the same holds true for secondary and third level responsibilities. By working through each of the assessment areas, a principal--if called into court--will have at least some support documentation for content and instructional validity.

> NOTE: The preceding illustration is a sample only. There is little possibility that any school would end up with a matrix remotely similar to the one on the preceding page. The matrix here simply shows how courses can be lined up on one dimension with subject areas along the other dimension. Further, the illustration shows how the topics and test items can be integrated throughout the curriculum giving all departments in the school some responsibility to be involved in as well as to own part of the process.

The process sketchily outlined here shou dn't take longer than an hour or so for each of the subject areas. The time needed depends upon the number of assessment topics used and the willingness of the staff to get down to business.

Unfortunately, the procedure, even when completed, is not enough totally to protect the principal and the staff. The procedure, unfortunately, comes under the heading of "necessary but not sufficient." Even with the precaution, there are at least two factors over which the principal has very little control. First, though teachers may have agreed to teach a particular topic within their subject field, they may purposely or inadvertently omit the topic. Perhaps, to cover the possible omission, the principal should request a lesson plan from the teacher on the day the material is presented to the students. For some students, this safeguard ought to cover the accountability requirements of content and instructional validity.

The second and even more stubborn difficulty centers on the transient student. As the law is currently written, a student must pass the performance competency standards within the district where s/he expects to graduate. Unless special arrangements are made (discussed in the next section), the student must pass the tests in his/her last district even if the move is made the final week of school. Even if assessment exams have been passed in two or three other districts in California, the performance must be repeated. Although few, if any, students transfer the last week of school (one out of four families in the United States moves each year), it is possible that a relatively high number of students do transfer at the beginning of their senior year.

If background information on the assessment items is taught early in a student's high school career, and if a transfer student takes and fails the performance test during the last semester of the senior year--it may be quite difficult for the school to show to a court that the student had actually been taught the material on which the final tests were based. There may be only one way out of this dilemma--that requires a board of education policy, i.e., reciprocity.

Reciprocity For Students Between Districts

AB 3408 and AB 65 in two separate paragraphs seem to be somewhat in conflict; the apparent conflict, however, may be a result of legislators trying to maintain local control for boards of education. In one paragraph in the laws, it states that a student who passes the minimum performance test once need not pass (for that matter even take) the test again. The statement holds only when the tests are administered within the same district.

On the other hand, other paragraphs in the laws also state that an individual must pass the test in the district from which the student receives a diploma. This is the "local control" feature of the law.

Unless the local board of education feels strongly to the contrary, a policy of reciprocity can be adopted. In essence the policy is similar to the one that allows credit for the subjects in a course of study a student carries forward from one district to another. If a reciprocity policy is established, it will generally take care of most of the instructional and content validity problems for transfer students--presuming they have passed the appropriate tests in their former district. There is, however, still a problem for those students who transfer to a new school late in their high school days when the students have not passed the competency tests. To date no district--to my knowledge--has figured out a way to overcome this last constraint. There must be some procedure to protect schools and students, but this information will need to be passed along in subsequent ACSA publications as it becomes available.

Reciprocity issues are both philosophic and legal. That is, a school board must decide philosophically whether it will accept other local standards as those applicable in its district. Some boards may be so concerned about what they consider to be an erosion of their local control--via regulations on categorical programs or through state/federal legislation--that they are unwilling to give away one more area of decision-making; the reciprocity policy will undoubtedly cause some hot and heavy debates on the perceived matter of legislative intrusion.

The local concern may even more be fundamentally related to accountability. If a specific board grants a diploma, undoubtedly that board will be held responsible to any subsequent litigation should the student and/or parents claim negligence or malpractice. Because standards are developed locally, levels of expectations will be higher and/or lower depending on the special contingencies applicable within the district. In the long run, legal considerations may have greater influence on a district and its policies than philosophical values. Both matters obviously need careful analysis.

Test Security--And Optional Forms Of The Assessment Instruments

Even before the performance standards became official, there were already several cases of serious security breaches. In at least one school, students paid others to take the examinations. This is quite possible in a large high school because in a large group testing situation the proctors often do not know all of the students. In the case cited, the discovery was made because a teacher happened to know the name of a student and the name on the paper the student was completing didn't match. With a little questioning, the plot was uncovered. Evidentally a money-back guarantee was offered by those who took the tests for the other students. In the

school mentioned here a group of nearly fifty students was involved. The school changed its testing procedure so all testing is now done in small groups.

Another security hassle resulted when students who were assisting the English department as aides removed the answer sheets from unlocked files. The aides were found sharing the answers with their friends. Another student turned in the aides because he felt slighted; he was unable to get a copy of the information. He decided if the answers were unavailable for him, no one else should have the advantage. The problem was turned over to the school administration. Obviously, responsibility for test security is important--not only in keeping prepared tests and their answer sheets in a locked and secure place, but also in making certain all students pass in their questions upon termination of the testing session. An individual realizing s/he might not have a very good possibility of meeting the performance levels on the original exam could decide to neglect turning in the appropriate papers. Subsequent testing, with a little study and memorization, should swing the results much more in favor of the student.

One way to help with the security matter is to have three or four variations of the same test--and to rotate the scheduling of the tests so students must demonstrate their competence at the items on the test rather than on memorization of correct answers. Even if there are multiple tests--either by having similar items on alternative tests, or by cutting and pasting a master test into various formats--the original documents and their score sheets need to be secured. This is only fair for all concerned. Since most schools have a safe--accessible to only a very few people--this seems a good place to maintain the records.

Continuous Modification and Reconstruction

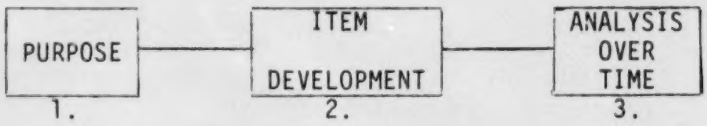
Over time educators will learn more about the development, implementation, and evaluation of performance standard requirements. Continued modification and updating of existing paper and pencil assessment instruments should be anticipated. Moreover, the perfection of non-paper and pencil evaluation criteria should be developed.

When test items are developed at the local level, it is unlikely (in the early years) that enough baseline information will be available to establish both consistency and validity. Obviously any assessment should be consistent over time and the test should truly measure what it purports to measure. Let's face it, major test development companies have considerably more expertise as well as a more select sample of people to draw from than most local school districts. Even then developers still have difficulty assuring test validity and reliability.

But schools generating performance standards have a different set of guidelines to use than do the test development companies. Rather than selecting items on the basis of an established normal curve--nearly all students will get one of the items correct and nearly all students will miss at least one item, proceeding on a graduated scale--the competency test developers attempt to design instruments on which all students meet the requirements. At the same time, competency test developers attempt to keep the standards reasonably high--out of the path of public criticism.

Local developers may find the further modification and improvement of test items aided when the process is thought of in three discrete steps. Each

discrete step contains a few internal procedures as well. (Illustration below.)



Rather than jumping immediately to Step 2 (Item Development), those constructing the assessment devices can help themselves by thinking through with other publics (other educators, students, parents, other members of the community) the kinds of competencies an individual is likely to need in his/her lifetime. At best this is an educated guess based upon the publics' perceptions of the past, present, and future. Currently it may be more realistic to believe that a minimum performance requirement is that of reading at, say, the ninth grade level rather than expecting all students to read COBAL, a technical computer language. In this example there is a rather large gap between what can be described as minimal competency and a higher order competency. Obviously those determining purposes will have to make much finer distinctions as they determine basic need rather than in the sample used here. Is it, for instance, necessary for students to learn how to measure the area of a triangle or to be able to identify the seven parts of speech? Traditionally, mathematics and grammar teachers, respectively, have invested hours banging home concepts about triangles and adverbs. The question is: What is minimal and what isn't? I say again, the answer is a calculated (hopefully) guess.

Once purposes have been defined, then multiple items can be prepared to assess the intended purposes. In the test item design state, however, unless care is taken the test producer may have one set of responses in mind and the person taking the test may have an entirely different point of view. In a school located near Modesto, for instance, the students were asked to examine some pictures and then to mark those pictures that represented living objects with an "X" and those representing non-living objects with an "O." The picture in doubt was one that could have been perceived by the elementary age youngster as either an acorn or a top. The youngster could have been charged with an incorrect answer if she perceived the pictorial presentation inaccurately. If the student had marked the item incorrectly, the test would have lacked validity, i.e., it did not measure what it purported to measure. This example may appear trivial, but there are other instances of inadequate test design. The SHARP test, developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District, in its early stages had a sample problem on the front page--a sample to show students how to perform the test--that was inaccurate. Additionally, some of the samples in the State Department of Education production--Technical Assistance Guide--designed to show educators how to prepare performance standards included incorrect samples. The point here is not to criticize the hard work of those in the LAUSD or the SDE, but to point out how difficult it is to have absolutely accurate and valid items on the assessment instruments. Validity and reliability requires time, competence, and commitment. (I might add, incidentally, so does preparing the actual copy of the test instruments. Some of the ditto master copies I've seen don't express a very serious concern on the part of a few educators. Students with poor vision have an exceptionally hard time when plagued with a fuzzy copy; all students deserve the best professional care we can provide.)

Step 3 helps to achieve the "over-time" consistency. Each item on each instrument should have a specific profile constructed upon the completion of each test administration. This helps teachers know if the item is testing what it is supposed to test, if interventions in the regular course of study are working, and/or if the item--for one unknown reason or another--just doesn't work. If there are multiple items for each purpose, a school may decide to use those items that work rather than investing considerable diagnostic time attempting to determine where the bugs are hidden.

Earlier in this publication, mention was made of test items that represented a transfer of classroom knowledge to real-life experiences. Another word of encouragement is offered here: when reconstructing or modifying the existing tool(s), attempt to discover ways the knowledge of the tested process can be transferred, i.e., applied.

Obtaining reliability and validity is one thing, developing competency assessment items that reflect the transference of skills is another--and developing alternatives to paper and pencil examinations is still quite another. I am aware of only two or three palces that have tried to make arrangements for competency demonstrations on other than paper and pencil tests--and none of these schools is located in California.

The laws in California clearly make it possible for schools to allow students to demonstrate competency in ways other than on paper and pencil examinations. In a school in Denver, for instance, students can demonstrate a certain level of competency in mathematics and reading by following the directions on a blueprint to construct a crystal radio. The performance test comes when the switch on the radio is turned. If music plays, the student has passed; if not, back to the drawing board. When the radio operates, the staff concludes the student was able to read and follow the directions of the blueprint and that the student knew some minimal data regarding metrics. (One step in the blueprint requires the student to cut a piece of copper wire a certain metric length and then to roll the wire around a spool to make a crystal.)

Other schools have set up simulated telephone stations whereby students are expected to look up a specific number in a telephone book--and then to place a call to that number. If the call is received at the correct number, the student passes; the school then presumes the student can read the telephone book, follow directions, and make the telephone work. Using a telephone may indeed be a minimum performance competency for some people in the United States.

Students involved in work-study or vocational education programs may also demonstrate their performance expectations by actual on-the-job responsibilities. Through their jobs they may demonstrate whatever is required by practical applications of certain skills.

The reason pencil and paper options are used most frequently is because they are considerably more efficient to administer. Educators need to consider in the sense of professional obligation what is gained/lost between the paper and pencil and application alternatives. In either case--paper/pencil and/or application--much long-range work is needed.

Positive vs. Punitive Experience

Realistically most students who normally perform reasonably well in school will not have much difficulty meeting the minimum competencies. For other

students at the lower end of the academic spectrum, however, the assessment process can represent another negative episode in a long sequence of punitive experiences. For too many youngsters--unless planned care is taken--the competency exercise can once again prove to students they are "stupid"--especially when they see many of their peers taking and mastering the tests with flying colors.

The punitive experience can bring about in fact what many of the opponents to performance testing theorize. These educators claim the "failures" will give up, quit school, and hit the bricks. Forecasts of increased crime and violence--because the students with low self-esteem normally in school will be loose in the community--are projected if the testing experience is truly negative. The students who don't perform well are probably those who have been caught in the "cumulative ignorance" syndrome.

What I mean by cumulative ignorance is--the students, over the years in schools, have gotten progressively further and further behind in their academic skills. Rather than working with the learner where his/her skills dictated, the educators failed to diagnose the student's ability and simply offered the same course of study to all students. The failure to differentiate instruction caused the academically talented not to be challenged and the less able to continue wallowing in their feelings of frustration and inadequacy. In essence, the less able student was told, "Here it is, take it or leave it." If one failed to possess the building block prerequisites, all that a person could do was leave it.

Most students can, perhaps, handle a few experiences of failure (some people believe these experiences build character), but if an individual fails time-after-time, then each effort to bounce back becomes increasingly more improbable. Since educators have probably been fairly successful in the world of academia, they may not be cognizant of the pain students really feel when they receive paper after paper marked with an "F." Many of the less able students portray the impression they really don't care or even want to try. One can understand how further frustrating and embarrassing it would be if an individual gave the appearance of trying and still failed. For self-protection, the students purposely are casual and nonchalant.

A principal can help reverse negative trends by investing in timely discussions with the staff, covering the points mentioned above. Additionally, a lower academic student can be shown, visually, via a profile chart the progress s/he has made toward achieving the expected levels of competency. And when success is reached, the staff can help the student celebrate the accomplishment. (Suggestions for the celebration of learning were outlined earlier in the publication.) Professional educators can help students realize their worth; educators can help nearly all youngsters meet the requirements for a diploma. For those few who can't succeed, special arrangements are necessary. It is not the purpose of this notebook, however, to discuss those options; suffice it here to posit the thought that educators have a responsibility to help people realize they are worthwhile even though they may have difficulty with--or even fail--the performance tests.

Collective Bargaining Concerns

To date, there have been few instances of collective bargaining vs. the need for performance standards, but the two purposes are in conflict.

To complete the competency job effectively, the total operation will take time. Time is needed to determine (through discussions) the purposes of the standards; time is needed to write and field test the performance items; time is needed to mark student profile charts; time is needed to prepare learning packages; time is needed for follow-up conferences. These examples purposely reflect only those responsibilities that usually are "outside of class" activities. Most of these chores are done at the close of the regular school day.

When the school day is amended in terms of time, any amendment is open to scope of work discussions, i.e., negotiations. Time is money; if teachers are expected to add time because of new responsibilities, the union will soon be at the table.

Interestingly, when AB 3408 was put into law, the author of the bill (Gary Hart) said implementation inherent in the law should not cost school districts more money. He pointed out that what was mandated by law should have been the obligation of schools all along. If the school wasn't meeting the requirements of the law, it should not have to spend more money--funds currently available would simply need to be redeployed.

The statement, at best, is eye-opening in theory, but unrealistic in practice. Assemblyman Hart realized the problem himself. Not only has he had continued interest in the implementation of the legislation, but he provided leadership toward the passage of AB 551--a staff development bill for teachers.*

Even with the staff development opportunities, there will be a continued drive by teacher unions to obtain more time in the school day and/or school year. Length of the work day and/or year is definitely in "scope" as far as contract negotiations are concerned. Moreover, many administrators believe the teacher unions will use the performance standards legislation to expand the scope of SB 160 by moving negotiations into curricular areas. Curricular discussions up to this point in time have been pretty much out of the negotiation strategies, but this may change.

Since the conditions surrounding education following the passage of Proposition 13 have caused a reduction of money in the coffers, school boards find themselves negotiating with very little funds not already committed to salaries or other programs; reserves are acutely tight.

There is probably no way to keep collective bargaining separate from the performance standards; perhaps the best that can be hoped for is restraint on the expansion of negotiation discussions into curricular areas.

Re-Examination of the Curriculum

As performance standards can be beneficial to students, they likewise can be helpful to the staff. Through the process, the staff can obtain both

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*ACSA's Operations Notebooks #20 and #22 describe processes and procedures for effective staff development programs. The notebooks can be ordered from the Burlingame Office.

immediate and long-range feedback regarding what they are teaching and how well it is retained. There is, perhaps, no other opportunity at the present time to learn this information--at least in most schools. Although educators may believe they obtain this data from standardized achievement tests, this is a mistaken notion. The achievement tests, contrary to performance tests, do not, usually, test on knowledge specifically presented during the regular course of study. If curriculum improvement is desired, gathering and using the immediate and long-range data through item analysis over time is imperative. Curriculum improvement is one more reason why all staff members need to take responsibility for the performance assessment program.

Staff members can also analyze other curriculum questions to determine:

- Are we putting too much emphasis on some topics?
- Are we putting too little emphasis on some topics?
- Are we keeping up with our changing society?

Each of these questions should be addressed when a staff makes a comprehensive curriculum study. At least for the first two questions, longitudinal item analyses are required.

On the bases of the analyses, a staff may notice that most of the students most of the time are answering some questions (representing particular mastery of knowledge) correctly. This doesn't mean the staff necessarily should remove the item (topic) from the assessment format; it may mean the subject is being over-taught. Since most teachers believe they never have enough time to teach everything they want to transfer to students, the teachers should be elated to find there are some things that can be touched upon only briefly or perhaps skipped altogether.

Unfortunately, upon further analysis of the data, the staff is also likely to find there are some topics that have been "taught?" over and over but the students have failed to get the message. This should tell the staff curricular revisions are necessary. One example of this kind of change has been the movement away from some of the modern mathematics texts back to more traditional materials and teaching methods. In this instance, both the public and educators recognized voids between what was supposedly being taught and that which was being learned.

Any time curricular offerings are changed, a staff may find it helpful to also consider different teaching and learning strategies. The book mentioned earlier, written by Benjamin Bloom (Human Characteristics and Learning), is one educators will want to study with care. They will also want to review the ACSA publication by Art Costa entitled RELATE. In this document, Costa demonstrates through verbal illustrations a variety of enabling behaviors that can enhance the learning process. Additionally, anyone seriously interested in practical teaching strategies will also want to review the work of the National Teacher Staff Development Centers in the Ventura/Santa Barbara County Offices and in Brawley (Steve Kingsford and Marjie Atwood are, respectively, directors of the centers).

Work of the staff development experts in the PDPIC (Professional Development and Program Improvement Centers) can also be studied with profit. Ken Young in the Butte County Office of Education and Loren Sanchez in the Upland School District have shown excellent leadership as have the other PDPIC directors. (For a complete listing of the centers, contact Ira Barkman, State Department of Education.) Educational resources are scarce. By

exploiting what others have already learned, less re-invention of the wheel is possible.

If the last question in three listed above is not answered, however, there is a reasonable possibility that educators will invest large quantities of time and talent figuring out better ways to do things they shouldn't be doing in the first place. (Examples of this phenomenon were depicted earlier in the manuscript.)

A "futures study" committee for each school can lead the way helping others on the staff and in the community keep aware of new conditions in society that have implications for schools. For example, if high levels of stress are now and will continue to be conditions of our post-industrial world, does this suggest that schools might well eliminate some elements of the instructional program and build in stress reduction techniques? More of the same may not provide resolution to the influences of stress.

ACSA has a publication entitled The Future and Its Implications for Education available upon order from the Burlingame Office. This book can serve as a resource document to a school's ad hoc task group--both in terms of a source reference for many of the creative and imaginative advancements (and some things which may be questionable in terms of furthering the achievements of humankind) as well as "how to" suggestions for further study. Some districts, e.g., Palo Alto, Tucson, and Dallas have each launched a future studies activity and have made modifications in their curricular offerings. Some of the curricular changes are now beginning to show themselves in the types of performance standards picked for assessment. The models of the futures study programs in the different districts vary in their composition and format, but the critical paths invariably lead to results well worth pondering.

Public Relations--Communicating Competency Standards*

Perhaps the one aspect of public education which has drawn the most public attention is the movement to assure that all high school graduates possess certain basic skills. We have all heard how students "can't read and write as well as in the good old days." Public concern over the talents of our public school graduates was one reason for the birth of the competency movement. The public is going to look closely at the results of these competency standards, meaning educators will carry a heavy responsibility in communicating those results. The job that we all do in this crucial area will go a long way in restoring public confidence in our schools. A poor job will continue to erode public confidence. Here are some approaches to assist districts in communicating the competency movement.

It's crucial that a district plan be developed. Remember that a school district doesn't have the choice of whether it will communicate or not. Every time a student, teacher, or custodian talks to the public about competency standards, public communications is going on. A district can help to make its publication communications more positive, but that requires planning. Decide how you want your message to be communicated, what are the key points to your message, who will communicate them, when and how frequently you will have structured communications.

*Lew Armistead, ACSA Public Information Executive, prepared this section of the Operations Notebook.

A district's plan should include a segment to inform everyone who is part of the district. Students, staff members, and volunteers continue to be prime communication resources for any district. Make sure they understand what your district's standards include, how they were developed, what they really mean, etc. Do this through staff meetings, staff bulletins, meetings with student leaders, and gatherings with volunteer groups, including site councils, PTA's, PTSA's, band boosters, sports boosters.

The plan should include continuous communications segments. It's important to communicate all the time, not just when a "crisis" arises. For example, a district shouldn't communicate for the first time about competencies when assessment results are released. Communications should start at the start and continue throughout the competency process. If your district hasn't started communicating its activities in competency standards, now is the time to begin.

Remember that public communications is not a tool to cover up mistakes. It is a great way to build support by showing people that you are doing a good job.

Here are some specific ideas to communicate. Show people that competency standards in your district were established by a broad cross section of the community, including parents, students, other community members and educators. Everyone shares responsibility for them, not just a principal and some teachers locked in a smoke-filled room.

Communicate what these standards mean. Let people know that they are different than the entrance requirements for the University of California. They will not guarantee that graduates of your district are Einsteins, but that they do have basic skills.

Indicate to your community that everyone has a responsibility for educating students. It's not just up to the school; parental support is crucial. For example, teachers can only assign homework, parents must help assure that students complete that assignment. Parents also play an important role if students are unsuccessful in passing their first try at the competency standard assessment. The law requires that parents be invited to participate in a conference to plan ways to help the student meet those standards. Many parents throughout the state are not attending these conferences. A district's public publications can help parents understand their role.

Emphasize that failing the first assessment does not mean the end of a student's academic life. Communicate how students are helped through the remediation segment of the competency process.

Use all means available to communicate about your district's competency program. It's that important. Use community newsletters, radio, newspapers, verbal communicators, school newsletters, letters to parents, student newspapers, speakers' bureaus, coffee klatches, whatever works for you!

There are two public relations issues so important they merit special attention here. One is so obvious it often is overlooked and the other is one most educators haven't thought about at this point in time. Serious, negative results can accrue if the matters aren't acted upon.

The first issue is related to the problem of a student who performs quite well in school, but who fails on the competency examination. As explained earlier in the paper, most of the higher-achieving students usually have no

difficulty meeting the school's expectations. Ignoring those who do achieve well (B+ average in the classroom), but who fail the competency tests is likely to convince the public that our schools have--as many suspect--seriously inflated grades. For why else could a student be in the upper portion of the class and still not possess fundamental skills?

The National Schools Public Relations Association's research on community attitudes about schools--and how those attitudes are formed--shows students as the primary communication medium. Their communication carries over to "others" in the public as well as parents. The relationship between the high-achieving student, the lack of success on the performance standards, and the need for positive communication from the students to the public constitutenties is rather obvious. While positive communication is important across the board, it may be necessary to give even greater care to the communication demand for the type of student identified here.

The second issue--one that has largely been overlooked--has to do with the voucher initiative. Without going into all of the negative features of the voucher concept here (and ACSA firmly believes there are so many negative characteristics, they far outweigh the potential advantages of the family-choice plan as currently conceived), I'd like to call attention to the public relations aspects of student-parent conferencing and the possible resulting impact on the vote for/against vouchers.

Timing on the voucher initiative could not come at a worse moment. Unfortunately, people will go to the polls to cast their ballots on the initiative just at the time when many districts may be denying a sizeable percentage of students a high school diploma. This restriction on the child will be seen by many parents as an attack on themselves. (There is ample psychological evidence to support the notion that most parents see their children as an extension of themselves.) And it is far more supportive for one's self-esteem to lay the causes of problems on the shoulders of the schools and teachers than to share in the responsibility. I predict, as a consequence, that at least some parents will vote in favor of the voucher initiative because they will feel this is one way to get even with the schools for what might be preceived as negligence.

If the magnitude of the negative vote is to be kept to a minimum, special care must be taken to have communication exchanges with parents and students that focus on what action can be taken to overcome deficiencies rather than investing an inordinate amount of time trying to decide where blame should be placed. The demand here is great; hopefully some of the suggestions in this section will provide some guidelines for educators to ponder and enact.

Alternative Diplomas

At the present time in California, there is only one class of diploma. Even youngsters with severe mental and/or physical handicaps cannot be given a diploma which differentiates them from other students who follow and complete the district's prescribed requirements.

With AB 65 and AB 3408 a district is allowed, when appropriate procedures as described by law are followed, can identify students who have learning disabilities. For students so identified, performance expectations can be personalized, usually through a process similar and consistent with the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) as defined in PL 94-142. If and when

the students with learning disabilities meet the requirements of the IEP, they can be granted a diploma--but not a diploma which sets them apart from other students.

Students who remain in the school program over time, but who fail to pass the performance standards tests, may not be given a certificate of attendance in lieu of a diploma. Apparently some districts in California have board policies which permit the issuance of attendance certificates, but these policies--at least according to one interpretation of a ruling from the State Attorney General--are illegal. (Nothing is really illegal until proven so in court--so, no challenge, no problem.)

The diploma matter may lead to some amendments in AB 3408 and AB 65. Perhaps, however, it is premature at this time to make any amendments until more information is forthcoming from the field. As a minimum piece of action, administrators with ideas and/or suggestions should pass them along through the ACSA governance alternatives or through the association's committee structure. Hopefully, ACSA can help educators be active vs. reactive participants.

Near Finis

The day has just begun when California educators try to put the legislation of AB 65 and AB 3408 into practice. Clearly, no district is going to jump all the hurdles today. Unfortunately, as time passes there will be additional hurdles that at this time haven't even been identified. The courts/legislators will likely have many additional comments to make on the subject. Occasionally legislation is necessary; indeed, many argue the two current laws would have been needless if educators had enacted the accountability requirements of performance standards in the first place.

Education, being a public entity, is subject to the whims of decision-makers (in their infinite wisdom) to resolve all problems by outlining rather simple solutions to complex questions. Complex problems require complex solutions. The public, through their legislators, has indicated its desires. School people are not about the task of unraveling the threads that are somewhat tangled. The task, though, is now overhwelming. If the courts and the legislators can refrain from drastically changing the rules of the ball game--expect in those few areas where experience dictates the needs for change--concerned professionals can meet the challenge.

At first glance, one may get the impression there is too much to do with too little time to do it. The myriad responsibilities are, in fact, unmanageable if educators attempt to accomplish all the tasks at one time. But this needn't be.

Hopefully school people will carefully analyze the bugs in their performance standard system and begin--one step at a time--to solve the mysteries. One place to begin is to generate a checksheet that lists each of the topics included in this publication. If there are additional concerns, they too should be listed.

Then at a faculty meeting, an open discussion can be held to delineate the priority concerns in a given school. Perhaps no school should take on more than two or three of the top priorities during any one year. Working together on common priorities can give the staff some level of

solidarity and commitment toward specific purposes. Once closure has been reached, this gives the staff the knowledge that problems can be resolved; closure helps with motivation and morale. Keeping team motivation and morale at high levels is essential for a staff that may believe it is especially subject to unfair criticism.

There is much right with our schools. They, in fact, may be the most solid institution of all of our bureaucracies, particularly when one considers other bureaucracies such as: the courts, the postal system, the railroads, the FAA, the legislative system, and so forth. Any institution can make improvements. The competency standards mandate is a challenge, for improvement is important and possible.

APPENDIX A

The Curriculum Specialist and Leaders Committee and the Curriculum and Instruction Committee have been merged by action of ACSA's Representative Assembly, effective July 1, 1979 and given a new name.

1979 - 80

Curriculum and Instruction Leaders

Ken Sanders
Rio Linda Union District

Doris Prince
Santa Clara County Schools

Louis Bucher
Eureka City Schools

James Allen
Hoopa Valley High School

David Cole
Far West Elementary School

Marilyn Hammond
Rio Linda Elementary School

Patsy Barnes
Dixie Elementary School

Robert W. Parr
South San Francisco USD

Walt Capri
Livermore Unified SD

Eleanor Cochran
Stockton Unified SD

Colette Brinkman
Berryessa Union Elementary SD

Robert Reasoner
Los Altos Elementary SD

Rose Smith
Fresno Union School District

Marcie Furtado
Franklin Elementary

Malcolm W. Young
No. Salinas High School

Don Saunter
Alisal Union ESD

Herb Neufeld
Kern High School District

Kay Moore
Chino Unified School District

Eugenie Howard
Ventura County Schools

Don Duncan
Los Angeles County Schools

Robert Downey
Bellflower Unified SD

William Norin
Charter Oak Unified SD

Venetta Whitaker
Weigand Elementary School

Regina Cain
Tustin Unified School District

Louis Drexel
Bolsa Grande High School

Ronald Hockwalt
San Diego County Schools

APPENDIX B

MATRIX TO ANALYZE A DISTRICT'S RESPONSE ON

IMPLIMENTATION OF AB65 PROFICIENCY SKILLS

Item Number	Section 51215 (Ed. Code)		
	HAS YOUR DISTRICT:		
1.	Adopted basic skills standards for Grades 7-12? (required as of June, 1978)	Yes *I.P. NO	
2a.	Already adopted basic skills for Grades 4-6? (required as of June, 1979)	Yes I.P. No	
2b.	Adoption processes to be complete June, 1979?	Yes I.P. No	
3a.	Restricted standards to 3 basic skills areas?	Yes I.P. No	
3b.	Included standards for other content disciplines? (Specify which and grade levels).	Yes I.P. No	
4.	Adopted differential standards for diagnosed disabled learners? (If yes, briefly annotate on reverse side).	Yes I.P. No	
5.	Actively involved parents/others in setting standards?	Yes I.P. NO	
6a.	Decided upon English-language assessment instruments? (If yes, specify 4-6; 7-9; 10-12).	Yes I.P. No	

Item Number	Section 51215 (Ed. Code)		
	• District Developed?	Yes No	
	• Contracting for development?	Yes No	
6b.	Are your assessment Instruments: • Criterion-Referenced?	Yes No	
	• Norm-referenced?	Yes No	
	• Other modality?	Yes No	
7a.	Designated grade(s) at which assessment will be administered? (Specify grades)	Yes I.P. No	
7b.	Determined method for documentation of competency? (Specify method)	Yes I.P. No	
7c.	Provided for longitudinal evaluation of individual pupil progress?	Yes I.P. No	
7d.	Established retention/promotion policies contingent on competency?	Yes I.P. No	
8.	Planned for assessment in languages other than English? (Optional by law. Specify languages and grade levels)	Yes I.P. No	

Item Number	Section 51215 (Ed. Code)		
9.	Established procedures for mandated conferences?	Yes I.P. No	
	• Developed?	Yes No	
	• In Progress?	Yes No	
	• Implemented? (If yes, specify grade levels)	Yes No	
10.	Determined plans for written communications to parents? (If yes, specify grade levels)	Yes I.P. No	
	• In English?	Yes No	
	• In other languages? (If yes, specify languages)	Yes No	
11.	Developed instructional plan?	Yes I.P. No	
	• In regular classes?	Yes I.P. No	
	• In special classes?	Yes I.P. No	

Item Number	Section 51215 (Ed. Code)		
11.	Developed instructional plan? (Cont'd)		
	• In grades 4-6?	Yes I.P. No	
	• In grades 7-9?	Yes I.P. No	
	• In grades 10-12?	Yes I.P. No	
12.	Planned to retest for mastery?	Yes No	
	• At which grades?		
13.	Established policies re certificate in lieu of diploma at end of 12th grade?	Yes I.P. No	
14.	Plans for developing alternative means of meeting prescribed course of study?	Yes I.P. No	
	• In regular curriculum?	Yes No	
	• By special curriculum?	Yes No	
	ADDITIONAL CONCERNS:		
15.	Issues of conferencing costs? (AB 65/SB 90 notices, meetings, etc.)	Yes I.P. No	

Item Number	Section 51215 (Ed. Code)		
16.	Issues of reciprocity between districts re acceptance of proficiency standards and assessments for transferring students.	Yes I.P. No	
17.	Issue of provisions made for students over age 18 who might be foreclosed from earning a diploma.	Yes I.P. No	
18a.	Do you have or forsee legal problems in implementing proficiency standards? (See Dept. of Ed. Appendix K)	Some None	
18b.	Can you suggest ways the district could minimize potential liabilities under the legislation?	Some None	
19.	Is summer school considered a full opportunity for instruction under the law?	Yes No	

* In process or in progress

Developed by:

Walter J. Lansu, Administrator
Reading Support Services Center
Los Angeles Unified School District
January 12, 1979

APPENDIX C

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Instruction

EXCERPT FROM CH. 894 EDUCATION CODE
PROFICIENCY IN BASIC SKILLS

NOTE
Source Referent To Matrix Item Numbers

SEC. 43. Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 51215) is added to Chapter 2 of Part 28 of the Education Code, to read:

Article 2.5. Student Progress, Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Section 51215. The governing board of each school district maintaining a junior or senior high school shall, by June 1, 1978, adopt standards of proficiency in basic skills for pupils attending school within its school district. 1

The governing board of each school district maintaining grades 6 or 8, or the equivalent, shall, by June 1, 1979, adopt standards of proficiency in basic skills for pupils attending such grades. 2

Such standards shall include, but need not be limited to, reading comprehension, writing, and computation skills, in the English language, necessary to success in school and life experiences, and shall be such as will enable individual achievement to be ascertained and evaluated. Differential standards and assessment procedures may be adopted for pupils with diagnosed learning disabilities. 3 3-4

Governing boards maintaining elementary or junior high schools located within a school district maintaining a high school shall adopt standards of proficiency in basic skills which are articulated with those standards adopted by the school district maintaining the high school.

Designated employees of all school districts located within a high school district and one or more designees of the high school district shall meet prior to June 1, 1979, to plan for articulation of elementary and high school proficiency standards, and as necessary thereafter to review the effectiveness of such articulation procedures.

Standards of proficiency shall be adopted by the governing board with the active involvement of parents broadly reflective of the socioeconomic composition of the district, administrators, teachers, counselors, and, with respect to standards in secondary schools, pupils. 5

Section 51216. Beginning in the 1978-79 school year, the governing board of each district maintaining a junior or senior high school, and beginning in the 1979-80 school year, the governing board of each district maintaining an elementary school, shall take appropriate steps to ensure that individual pupil progress towards proficiency in basic skills is assessed in the English language during the regular instructional program at least once during the 4th through 6th grade experience, once during the 7th through 9th grade experience, 6 7

and twice during the 10th through 11th grade experience, provided that any pupil who demonstrates proficiency up to prescribed levels for graduation from high school need not be reassessed. Nothing in this section shall preclude any district from conducting an assessment of any pupil in English and in the native language of such pupil.

It is the intent of the Legislature that pupil assessments measure the progress of each pupil in mastering basic skills rather than the pupil's performance relative to his or her classmates.

In the case of any pupil who does not demonstrate sufficient progress toward mastery of basic skills so that he or she will be able to meet prescribed standards upon exit from the 6th, 8th, or 12th grade, whichever is appropriate, the principal shall arrange a conference among the principal or the principal's designee, the parent or guardian of the pupil, and a teacher familiar with the pupil's progress to discuss the results of the individual pupil assessment and recommended actions to further the pupil's progress.

The secondary school pupil shall attend the conference. The elementary school pupil shall attend the conference unless the principal's designee and the parent or guardian agree that such presence would not be in the pupil's best interest.

The pupil and the parent or guardian shall be requested in writing to attend the conference. Such notice shall be written in the primary language of the parent or guardian, whenever practicable.

Absent a response from the parent or guardian, the school shall make a reasonable effort to contact him or her by other means to communicate directly the information contained in the written request.

At the conference, the principal or the principal's designee shall describe the instructional program which shall be provided to assist the pupil to master basic skills. If the parent or guardian does not attend the conference the principal or the principal's designee shall communicate such information by other means within 10 days of the date of the conference.

Instruction in basic skills shall be provided for any pupil who does not demonstrate sufficient progress toward mastery of basic skills and shall continue until the pupil has been given numerous opportunities to achieve mastery.

Section 51217. Subsequent to June 1980, no pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school if he or she has not met the standards of proficiency in basic skills prescribed by the secondary school district governing board.

The State Board of Education shall, by February 1, 1978, prepare and distribute to each school district maintaining a junior or senior high school, and by October 1, 1978, prepare and distribute to each district maintaining an elementary school, a framework for assessing pupil proficiency in reading comprehension, writing, and computation skills. Such framework shall include

a range of assessment items in each skill area. The assessment framework shall be provided solely to assist each school district in the development of its own pupil assessments as required by Section 51216.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize or permit the State Board of Education to adopt statewide minimum proficiency standards for high school graduation.

SEC. 43.5. Section 51225 of the Education Code is amended to read:

Section 51225. No pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school who has not completed the course of study prescribed by the governing board. Requirements for graduation shall include:

(a) English
(b) American history
(c) American government
(d) Mathematics
(e) Science
(f) Physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.
(g) Such other subjects as may be prescribed.

The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and students, shall, by January 1, 1979, adopt alternative means for students to complete the prescribed course of study which may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, work experience or other outside school experience, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary institute. Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to students, parents, and the public. 14

SEC. 44. Section 51225.5 of the Education Code is repealed.

Prepared by:
Reading Support Services Center